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2nd Ambassador Joins Criticism Of Reagan Team

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SAN SALVADOR, Dec. 11 — U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua Lawrence Pezzullo today joined Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White in accusing persons claiming to represent the Reagan transition team of undermining their authority in Central America and worsening grave crises.

In unusual on-the-record statements by telephone from Managua, Pezzullo, a career diplomat who is in his second ambassadorship, said "leaks from the team" of President-elect Ronald Reagan on proposed policy, and visits here by people allegedly portraying themselves as Reagan's emissaries, "undercut you in the midst of a delicate situation."

"It is disturbing, and I don't think it serves the transition, and I don't think it serves Reagan," Pezzullo said. "It's certainly not a smooth way to take over the reins. I feel sorry for Reagan." He said the president-elect "should have the best professional advice because of the sensitivity of the area."

In another recent conversation, Pezzullo said he fears that the right wing of the Republican Party may force the Reagan administration to "feed" it by letting it "eat up Latin America. It's cheaper than some other places like the Middle East, the Soviet Union or China, where no president is going to have much room for radical policy changes."

The immediate cause of White's and Pezzullo's outrage is a reported "hit list" prepared by Reagan advisers naming envoys for immediate removal as liberal "social reformers." White and Pezzullo were on the list.

Robert Neumann, head of Reagan's State Department transition team, could not be reached for comment today. Earlier this week, however, Neumann said the "hit list" published after it was leaked last week, was only a "first cut" draft composed by individual team members and was neither policy nor even a recommendation that would necessarily be passed on to Reagan.

Neumann and other transition team members also denied having sent Cleto Di Giovanni Jr., a former CIA officer with ties to the team, as an emissary to Central America last week. Di Giovanni also denied in Washington that he had portrayed himself as representing Reagan.

Pezzullo said that Di Giovanni had shown up in Nicaragua, as well as El Salvador, last week and had met with a number of people as a Reagan emissary, and that he is not the only person to have done so in the last several months.

"This has been going on for a long time and for the Reagan people to say now that 'these guys don't speak for us' is kind of lame," Pezzullo said. "I don't buy that for a second."

Both White and Pezzullo say they fear that delicate political situations in the region will be upset by spreading reports that Reagan will support a right-wing takeover in El Salvador and will seek to drive the leftist Sandinistas from control in Nicaragua.

More important, Pezzullo said today, he feels the regional situations will move so rapidly on the basis of such reports that Reagan will have few options by the time he is inaugurated.

The Republican Party platform, and numerous Reagan spokesmen, have said they believe the Nicaraguan government is Marxist and Cuban-controlled. They have called for an end to the Carter administration policy of supporting the Sandinistas.

On El Salvador, Reagan officials have said they believe the military should be strengthened to quash a leftist threat, despite widespread reports that the military itself is engaged in repression and murder against the civilian populace.

White said on Tuesday that interference from Reagan advisers and hangers-on who claim to speak for him has seriously increased the chances of outright civil war in El Salvador, where the administration has supported wide-ranging social and economic reforms in an effort to diffuse the appeal of the left.

White and Pezzullo are veteran foreign service officers — Pezzullo has served under every administration since Dwight D. Eisenhower — with decades of experience in Latin America. Both indicate they have put their immediate futures on the line by speaking out.

They characterize the current situation in Latin America as requiring pragmatism and not doctrinaire posturing.

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